

A LIVING BREATHING HIEROGLYPHIC



In A Typical Old Egyptian Head Dress



LUBOVSKA, Who Translates Into Dances the Ancient Hieroglyphic Language of the Egyptians

Newest Wonderful Russian Dancer Is a Reincarnation From the Days of Ptolemy, When She Was an Egyptian Priestess.

A THOUSAND iron throats flung raucous midnight to New York. A thousand times repeated, the message vibrated, lingered, blended in a tangled ribbon of sound; it fluttered along Broadway, threading in and out of gilded doors that swung toward gilded mirrors; it penetrated the Gayest Restaurant and the lights dropped, so revelers sat round tables in pools of shadow. The orchestra stopped on a crashing chord and began to play a humming monotone; a flutter went round the room. Lubovska was going to dance.

She glided across the stage, her white robe billowing. Almost disappointing to those who hadn't seen her before; a little too slender, with dark, plain face and lips that never smiled. Yet she was very graceful; she seemed part of the droning music.

Time rolled back like a curtain. The stars hung low like luminous butterflies. A wind came out of the south, bearing a hint of far-flung spaces. Was sandalwood spicing the air? And the muffled beating—that was the pulsing of the Night Song. Night and a white stone parapet against the sky and a weird strain weaving through the beating of tomtoms. And a dancer, like a spirit of expression, posturing on her white feet, telling of the miracle of Night's descent with her hands, her head, her wonderful lithe form. Egypt worshiped the Night.

It was over. She was only the little Russian dancer—the spirit—too slender, with dark, plain face and lips that never smiled. But by her art they had lived in Egypt through the measure of a droning song.

In a crowd; when you're alone; sometimes it seems brought about by the presence of certain persons; again it's apparently the result of certain events. A tone of voice, a gesture—and you're puzzling over a half-memory. When did it happen before? Where? Did you dream that it happened?

The "memory" is explained variously. It's all but obliterated impression re-established by similarities of circumstance, struggling for expression; prenatal impression; a rift in the haze of the present which allows glimpses of previous existence. That last explanation is the one a little Russian girl made to herself when she first learned to dance and soon after she heard of such things as fatalism and reincarnation.

The dances of her own country came to her about as naturally as walking; pleasure and grief, mysticism, religious emotion—she expressed them all in rhythm and movement. Then she began to weave stories into her dancing, working out legends of her race.

About this time Lubovska, being sixteen years old, decided to marry. Domesticity lasted seven months; then her husband died. Being the widowed daughter of a Russian household isn't the most attractive life in the world. Besides the little dancer's art began to call again. So she started out to see the world. She worked her way through Russia to China and sailed rather aimlessly for South America. She found herself in the land of the Incas where the past hangs heavy. Her imagination was fired again; the elusive feeling of having been there before was awakened. She explored the country from corner to corner and her sense of bewilderment ceased to be fascinating and became troublesome. Finally she decided that she'd arrive at no solution of her problem in this place where the problem was most insistent. So she sailed for Mexico.

As An Exponent of the "Mourning Dance" Photos © by Underwood and Underwood.

And in Mexico her dancing immediately found favor. Native dancers tried to pick up her Russian steps. She attempted a slow dance made up of a series of postures that she copied from figures cut

on vases and pottery of the south. The effect was sensational. Porfirio Diaz invited her to his court at Chapultepec, and insisted that she remain there while she went on studying the prehistoric Indians.

It was quite by accident that she happened upon a story of ancient Egypt. Someone had presented the court with illustrations and literature on late expeditions; there were pictures of statues dug from the ancient tombs, and descriptions of temples and amphorae telling the history of the country.

And immediately the "feeling" that had become a problem returned more than ever pulsing. She gathered all she could find on Egypt and shut herself up to work it all out. Then there was a three-day period of thought; she saw no one—not even the servant who came to the door begging her to take a little food. She refused everything excepting water. During the three days and the first two nights she sat without moving, staring straight ahead, just thinking. The third night she fell asleep. And during the sleep the answer to all her questions came to her in a dream, she said.

She tells of the dream. "It was all hazy at first," she says. "I seemed to be

walking in a sort of moonlight that was like liquid silver. Then, when I could see, I knew it was only the air clear and wonderful as crystal. All around me there were spaces, yellow red, rolling like the waves of the sea. And against the sky line were palm trees growing taller than any I had ever seen.

"I seemed to be walking slowly along a beaten roadway. Sometimes the wind caught up sand, fine and white as powder, and hurled it at me. And I knew I was walking along the boundary of Sahara.

"There was a palace of white marble at the end of my journey and silk covered couches and slaves and all the luxury of past ages. Princes were there, too, under the waving fans. And I danced for them—but as I'd never danced before. I was a priestess and my dance was the expression of joy, for one of them had returned from the war, victorious.

"When I awakened I knew it hadn't been an ordinary dream. It was memory stirring—stirring to expression through a sleep of thousands of years. I remembered other things, too. You see, I lived in the shadow of the Pyramids in the days of Menes, the first historical king of Egypt. I recall, clearly as I remember the events of yesterday, the events of my life there. I was the dancer in my court—the one who expressed the 'Mourning Dance' when death visited the household and the 'Dance of Joy' when victory or celebration was upon the land. Every gesture meant something then; the manner of holding the Lands, the movements of the feet—everything was a definite expression.

"I'm trying to do those dances over again now for the benefit of a materialistic age. Not sensation, but education, is my aim. I feel as though I'm doing something for the glory of my home—Egypt, you know—when I do those dances now."